

# Christian Community

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## Christian Social Action in The Program of Advance

The Commission on Christian Social Action was established by the Evangelical and Reformed Church to study the bearing of the Christian faith on the life of both the individual and society, to provide information concerning the social problems in which we as Christians have a concern, and to assist in the development of a program of social action in the congregation, the synod, and the Church at large.

The range of concerns entrusted to the Commission includes home and family, community welfare, public education, race relations, economic life, citizenship, and international affairs.

In dealing with these concerns the Commission has four basic functions—

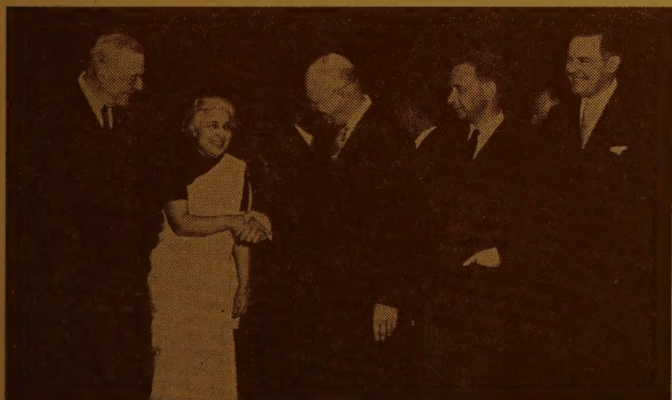
**RESEARCH**—securing adequate, relevant, and accurate information concerning issues;

**EDUCATION**—providing information needed by pastors, committees, synods, and denominational agencies;

**ACTION**—taking appropriate steps to influence public policy, or assisting congregations, groups, or synods within the church to do so;

**SERVICE**—helping local churches train leaders and develop programs of social education and action befitting their opportunity and need.

The Commission is well aware that the Evangelical and Reformed Church's responsibility and program for Christian social action is not limited to the activities which it is possible for the Commission to carry on. Indeed, it has stated insistently that Christian social action is the responsibility of the entire Church, that it is the special concern of every congregation, and that it is conspicuously a sphere in which lay men and women have a distinctive contribution to make. The Commission exists for the very reason that it may be of assistance to the entire fellowship as at every level it bears its witness.



United Nations Photo

*World problems challenge the best thought and effort of us all.*

### Christ Calls To Faith and Action—Now!

"Both at home and abroad men and women struggle to see the meaning of their daily lives and relationships. Our culture and our civilization, the environment in which we bring up our children and the education we provide for them, the patterns of economic life and race relations, national politics and our relations to other nations—these are major concerns for Christian witness and action. The church has the responsibility of relating its faith more effectively to the problems of justice and community in local, national, and international life."

—*The Call to a Program of Advance*,  
Adopted by the General Council

### The Program of Advance

However significant the achievements of the past, the Church dare not stand still. The boards and agencies of our denominations have, therefore, been challenged to present to the General Synod at Lancaster in 1956 a Program of Advance which is in keeping with the faith and the resources which have been given us. This proposal, which has been commended to the General Synod by the General Council, calls for an increase in outreach, commitment, and service on the part of every local church and every denominational agency.

One of the nine goals of this Advance is "Every Congregation Engaged in Community Service and Social Action." Such a goal calls for the deepest consecration, the fullest effort, and the best leadership on the part of every congregation. In the light of the revolutionary situation described in the General Council's Call to a Program of Advance, none of the objectives presented is more urgent. No church that is serious about its Christian faith can neglect this crucial aspect of its witness.

But if our congregations are to be effective in their outreach and social ministry they will require and deserve more—not less—counsel and assistance from such agencies as the Commission on Christian Social Action. And the Commission is deeply concerned to lend every possible help toward that end. Therefore, in order that it may more adequately serve our churches the Commission proposes an expanded program at a number of crucial points.

In the following pages we endeavor to make clear some of the steps that must be taken if we are to meet the obligation which is placed upon us.



## 1. Publications

The usefulness of a national agency of the Church inevitably depends very largely upon the production, distribution, and use of printed materials. It can reach more members of more congregations through its publications than through any other medium.

At present 2,200 ministers and seminary students, 350 committee chairmen or keymen in local churches, 1,000 Women's Guild leaders, and nearly 1,000 other interested readers and subscribers receive **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY** regularly every month. Thousands of Christian Social Action Handbooks and other publications are distributed annually. Helpful materials produced by other agencies, religious and secular, are also widely used.

Pastors and lay people who are most concerned to do a better job in their local communities are asking for more of these resources. Special emphasis has been placed on providing more popular illustrated leaflets.

There is increasing desire for visual aids in the area of social action. The Bureau of Audio-Visual Aids is about to release a new 28-minute motion picture, **Train of Action**, in sound and color. Available from either the Philadelphia or the St. Louis branches of the Bureau, at \$12 per showing, this film will show how one church discovered its community responsibility and will stimulate many of our congregations to undertake a more effective community ministry. Other visual aids should be prepared to meet a variety of needs.

The Program of Advance puts us under obligation to assist in the preparation of materials of high quality. As a service agency dealing with situations and problems which change rapidly and affect the lives of all, the Commission dare not fail the pastors and lay leaders who are seeking to perform their social task.

## 2. Conferences and Institutes

Another important means of furthering an effective witness in our common life is to enable more persons to attend institutes, seminars, workshops, and conferences on citizenship, community problems, world order, race relations, and the principles of Christian social action.

Last year more than 1,200 pastors and lay people attended local, regional, synodical, or national seminars and institutes in which the Commission participated. These conferences provide both **information** about our social problems and **training** in methods of dealing with

# Advance In Chr

them. When more such opportunities are given and more key people are encouraged to attend, our members and congregations will greatly strengthen their influence for good.

The conferences on Religion and Public Education sponsored by the Commission have been warmly received by public school teachers and administrators. More of these are planned in more of our synods or groups of synods. The laymen of the Church showed such enthusiasm for the Conference on a Christian and his Daily Work that they asked the Churchmen's Brotherhood to cooperate in a similar conference on the Christian and his Responsibility as a Citizen.

## 3. Field Consultation

Every day the members of the staff are called on to reply to many letters, asking for information, requesting helpful literature, sharing their problems. Every year there are many opportunities to preach, to speak, to lead discussions, to conduct conferences, to participate in panels, or—possibly most important—to sit down and counsel with individuals and groups facing the problems of their community, trying to develop a social conscience in their church, seeking to discharge their stewardship.

Perhaps the outstanding development of the past triennium has been the expansion of the Commission's program of field service, made possible by the staff additions authorized at the time of the last General Synod. This channel of service has been highly commended. Small wonder that invitations for such consultation have steadily increased.

Such invitations are gladly accepted wherever possible, especially in the synods to which the Commission is zoned in any given year. However, there are many situations in which local leaders hesitate to call in staff. Some may not realize there are problems—or resources, either.

It is our hope to meet these situations in more systematic fashion, as synodical committees on Christian social action, with the encouragement of wise synod presidents, help us discover, reach, and serve them. As the demand and the opportunity for such service grows, we plan to provide an additional trained field secretary.



*Laymen consider Christian's daily work at Tiffin Conference.*

G. Gentry Bruhl



# *n Social Action*

## **4. Service to Synods**

The key to an effective Christian social action program throughout the Church is the synodical committee on Christian social action. It is responsible not only to bring before the synod the social issues of regional and national importance. It also has the task of aiding the congregations within the synod to develop their resources and to train their leaders.

A special function of the synodical committee is to assist the staff of the Commission in setting up field itineraries and in scheduling synodical institutes or workshops every fourth year when, according to the plan adopted by the General Council, the Commission is "zoned" to that synod and has a special responsibility to serve it.

In order to equip these synodical committees the better to carry out their duties, the Commission is seeking to intensify and extend its services to them. In addition to supplying them with special periodicals and pamphlets, it proposes (1) an annual conference of all synodical chairmen; (2) regional conferences for the committees of all synods zoned to the Commission; (3) more frequent meetings of staff members with synodical committees; (4) more substantial scholarship grants to encourage attendance at seminars and workshops; (5) more intensive attention to "zoned" synods.



*Staff member discusses Commission program.*

## **5. Race Relations**

Gratifying progress has been made in the attitude and practice of our people in racial and cultural relations. All of our seminaries, colleges, and many of our congregations are—as they should be—open to all persons upon equal terms regardless of race. Some of these congregations are fully inclusive, embracing worshipers of all ethnic groups. Some have only a few Negro, Indian, or Japanese-American members. Some have non-white children or young people in their community program or vacation church schools but none as yet in full membership in the church. Others are making serious efforts to meet the opportunity of their changing community.

But much more intensive work needs to be done in this area. This calls for more adequate printed and



*Workshop sessions arouse lively discussion.*

audio-visual resources, more sharing of experiences, more opportunities for personal consultation, and better trained personnel (lay and professional) for the specialized ministries required in certain circumstances.

The Fund for the Republic has made a grant of \$31,480 to enable the Council for Social Action and the Commission on Christian Social Action to secure two consultants to work with Evangelical and Reformed and Congregational Christian churches in the South in the interest of racial understanding. This is a special project with a two-year limit and presupposes that our Church will continue and expand its normal efforts for brotherhood and justice.

## **6. Interdenominational Cooperation**

The Evangelical and Reformed Church has a long history of interdenominational cooperation. Both the Reformed Church and the Evangelical Synod belonged to the Federal Council of Churches, established to reinforce and express the concern of the Protestant churches for a Christian witness in the life of society. Today it has in the National Council of Churches an even more potent extension of the church's efforts for brotherhood, justice, and peace.

Our program of Christian Social Action has been greatly strengthened by the staff leadership, publications, conferences, and other activities of the National Council's Division of Christian Life and Work. It has, therefore, been considered appropriate that, in addition to the support given by the General Synod to the general program of the Council, the Commission on Christian Social Action should make some contributions to the Departments of Social Welfare, Church and Economic Life, International Affairs, and Racial and Cultural Relations. The budgets of these departments are not fully provided for by the undesignated contributions of the member denominations.

Heretofore it has been possible for the Commission to make only small token payments to these Departments. The Officers of the Church have suggested that these contributions should be increased and that, in addition, General Synod should consider transferring to the Commission responsibility for the Evangelical and Reformed Church's obligations to the Department of Religious Liberty and to the Washington Office of the National Council.

These are all programs worthy of support. We must remember, however, that they can be supported only if the Commission is given resources sufficient to meet both denominational and interdenominational needs.



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### What Difference Will The Merger Make?

As the Commission on Christian Social Action has gone about the business of preparing its plans for the next triennium, there have been interested inquiries as to what effect our contemplated union with the Congregational Christians will have upon those plans. A few have wondered whether it is wise to initiate an Advance at such a time.

Let it be said at once that if an Advance is needed, it is needed whether there is a union in the making or not. The United Church will be stronger if both denominations enter it moving full speed forward rather than at snail's pace. This applies to every phase of the work. It certainly applies to the area with which we are dealing.

So far as the social action agencies are concerned, if we do not strengthen the program we shall weaken the witness of the United Church. In both denominations local churches will need literature, program aids, action suggestions, and field service. There will be just as many congregations and ministers as there are in the two bodies at present. Staff responsibilities may be reallocated, but there will be no less work to do. And there is no evidence that the difficulties in race relations and international affairs will be solved so quickly that our churches can dispense with committees and staff secretaries wrestling with these problems.

As a matter of fact, we may discover that the time has come for us to recover lost ground and make some fresh advances. Perhaps the United Church will want more specialists — in economic life and Christian citizenship as well as in race relations and international affairs — and more field secretaries in various parts of the country. It certainly cannot consider that it has too many!

## Counting the Cost

What are the financial resources required for such a minimal Advance as has been outlined in these pages? A glance at the Budget printed below shows first, for purposes of comparison, the current (1956) operating budget of \$60,700. The Advance Budget is found in the right hand column, which adds up to \$91,010. If General Synod adopts the principle of gradual annual increases the totals needed for the three years of the triennium are roughly \$70,000—\$80,000—\$90,000.

The present budget of \$60,700 is made possible by a General Synod apportionment of \$40,000 (of which only \$38,000 is currently guaranteed), an allocation of \$5,000 for Race Relations by the Board of National Missions, contributions from the Women's Guild Challenge and Thankoffering, and the use of about \$10,000 from reserve. This fund was accumulated during the interval between the authorization and the actual securing of present personnel and will be exhausted at the end of the current fiscal year. The difference between the \$40,000 apportionment approved by the General Synod of 1953 and the current budget of over \$60,000 represents the combined effect of the normal growth of program, more efficient service to the church, and increased cost of operations. Increase of travel and of travel costs, necessary salary adjustments recommended by the General Council, costs of office space, equipment, and printing all enter into the picture.

When these factors have been taken into consideration, it will be seen that the actual expansion proposed is measured by the suggested increase from \$60,000 to \$90,000. This sum of \$30,000 is accounted for as follows:

Increased program services, such as publications and conferences, call for \$3,700.

The special services to synods described above will cost approximately \$4,000.

Expanded field service will require an additional field secretary early in 1958. This addition plus adjustments in other salaries, in travel expense, and in office personnel are estimated to total \$15,000.

Increased office expense including rent amounts to at least \$1,300.

Additional contributions to the National Council of Churches have been included to the extent of \$6,000.

This means in effect that the \$70,000 requested for 1957 will merely maintain the present program, and the real Advance would come in the succeeding years.

However, it would be a mistake to regard the Advance as merely a matter of counting the cost in dollars and cents. These are simply the tools for doing the work which the Church — and the Church's Lord — wish to have done. And that work is measured by persons—individuals enlisted as committed citizens, improved relationships, witnessing churches, injustices combated, and world community furthered by our common efforts under God.

### THE COMMISSION'S BUDGET

	1956	1957	1958	1959
Salaries, Pensions .....	\$32,969	\$33,624	\$40,046	\$44,760
Travel-Commission and Staff .....	8,900	9,000	10,400	12,000
Rent .....	1,662	2,100	2,100	2,100
Telephone and Telegraph .....	900	900	1,200	1,200
Postage, Express .....	1,000	1,200	1,500	1,500
Office Supplies .....	1,200	1,200	1,500	1,500
Office Equipment .....	800	500	500	500
Printing .....	2,950	3,300	3,500	4,000
Literature .....	1,950	1,500	1,500	2,000
Research Materials .....	150	300	400	500
"Christian Community" .....	2,700	3,000	3,250	3,500
Visual Aids .....	222	250	250	350
Seminars and Conferences .....	3,400	3,000	4,000	5,000
Cooperating Agencies .....	275	300	300	400
National Council of Churches .....	1,000	6,700	6,700	7,200
Services to Synod .....		3,000	3,500	4,000
Miscellaneous .....	622	500	1,000	500
	\$60,700	\$70,374	\$81,646	\$91,010